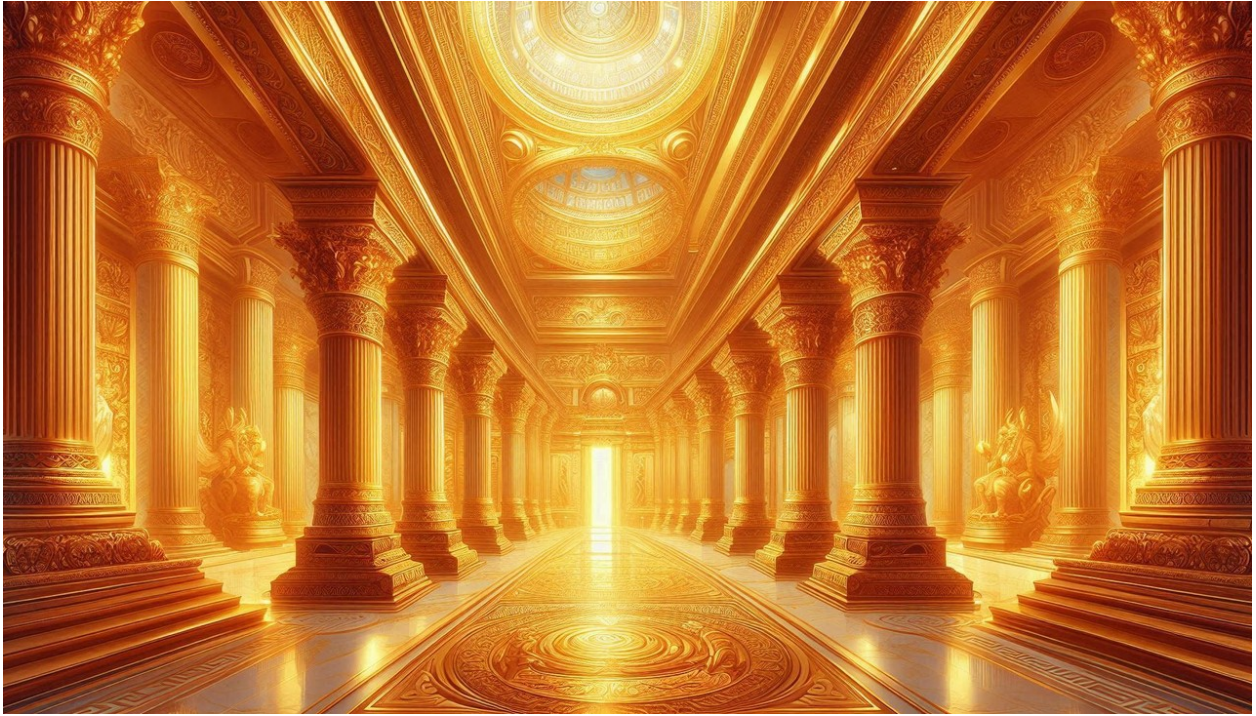


As we stepped through the magical portal, we found ourselves inside a breathtaking temple that left us in awe. The sheer magnificence of the place was overwhelming. Bathed in a golden hue, the walls and columns shimmered as if made from pure gold. Light seemed to emanate from everywhere and nowhere at once, casting a warm, ethereal glow over everything.

The temple was vast, with wide open spaces that seemed to stretch on forever. The floor, made of polished marble, was so smooth and reflective it looked like a mirror. Intricate patterns etched into the marble formed elaborate designs, telling a story of ancient times and forgotten magic.

Massive columns lined the hall, each adorned with intricate carvings and runes that pulsed with a faint, magical light. The columns were so tall they disappeared into the shadows above, giving the impression of an impossibly high ceiling. Between the columns, large archways led to other parts of the temple, each promising more wonders to behold.

In the center of the temple stood a grand altar, its surface covered in ancient symbols and surrounded by a soft, golden light. The altar seemed to be the focal point of the temple, radiating a powerful, calming energy. Around the altar were several statues of mythical beings, each crafted with exquisite detail. They seemed almost lifelike, their eyes following us as we moved.



The air was filled with the faint scent of incense, a soothing aroma that added to the temple's serene atmosphere. Soft, melodic chants echoed through the hall, their source unseen, creating a sense of peace and reverence.

As we took in the beauty of the temple, we couldn't help but feel a sense of awe and wonder. It was clear that this place was ancient and powerful, a sanctuary of magic and mystery. We knew that whatever lay ahead, we were in a place of great significance.

I took a deep breath, feeling the weight of the moment. "Woahhhh! Can you believe this? I've only read stuff like this in storybooks, but to see one in real life... Incredible."

James stepped forward, his eyes wide with amazement. "This place is incredible," he said, his voice barely above a whisper. "I've never seen anything like it. It's like stepping into a fantasy novel... except without the dragons. I hope."

Ramsey nodded, his expression serious. "We need to be careful. This temple is filled with powerful magic. We don't know what kind of challenges we might face here."

James grinned, trying to lighten the mood. "Challenges? You mean like finding the bathroom in this place? Because I'm pretty sure I saw a Minotaur there... oh wait, that's just a rock."

Ramsey, finally annoyed by James' usual jokes, sighed. "Let's stay focused. We need to find the Artifact and get out of here before anything... unexpected happens."

James couldn't resist one last quip. "Unexpected? Like a surprise party? Because I didn't bring a gift."

With renewed determination, we began to explore the temple, our footsteps echoing softly on the marble floor. The golden light guided us, illuminating our path as we ventured deeper into the heart of the temple. We knew we were on the brink of discovering something extraordinary, and we were ready to face whatever lay ahead.

As we approached the grand altar, the soft, golden light surrounding it seemed to intensify. The intricate symbols on its surface glowed

brighter, and we could feel a powerful energy emanating from it. With a sense of reverence, we reached out and touched the altar.

The moment our hands made contact, the entire altar began to hum with energy. The runes on its surface shifted and rearranged themselves, forming a new pattern. Suddenly, with a deep, resonant sound, a giant golden door appeared on the far side of the temple, its surface gleaming in the ethereal light.

"Looks like we found the way forward," Ramsey said, his voice filled with determination.

James grinned, trying to lighten the mood. "Well, at least it's not another portal. I was starting to get portal fatigue."

We walked towards the door, the golden light guiding our steps. As we reached it, the door slowly swung open, revealing a passageway that led to another chamber. The air was filled with a sense of anticipation, and we knew that whatever lay ahead was of great importance.

As we stepped through the door, James couldn't resist making a joke. "You know, if this were a video game, I'd be expecting a boss fight right about now."

I chuckled, appreciating his attempt to keep things light. "Let's hope it's just a treasure room."

Ramsey rolled his eyes but smiled. "Stay focused, guys. We don't know what's waiting for us."

We continued down the passageway, the golden light illuminating our path. The walls were adorned with more intricate carvings and runes, each one telling a story of ancient magic and forgotten times. The air grew cooler, and the sense of anticipation grew stronger with each step.

Finally, we emerged into a giant chamber. The room was vast, with high ceilings and wide open spaces. In the center of the chamber stood a large, ornate chest, its surface covered in golden runes that pulsed with a soft, magical light.

James couldn't help but make another joke. "Well, if there's a mimic in there, I'm out."

As we reached out to open the chest, we were suddenly cut off by three figures who appeared seemingly out of nowhere. They looked like locals, but their mystic outfits suggested they were here for the same reason we were. They stood in front of us, their eyes fixed on the chest, clearly wanting its contents as much as we did.

The first figure was a girl with long, flowing black hair that cascaded down her back like a waterfall of midnight. She wore a pink mage attire, consisting of a short, flowing robe that reached just above her knees. The robe was adorned with intricate silver embroidery, depicting ancient runes and magical symbols that seemed to shimmer in the golden light. Her eyes sparkled with a mix of

curiosity and determination, reflecting the magical aura that surrounded her. Her hands glowed with a pink aura, crackling with energy, ready for anything.



The second figure was a man with short, tousled black hair. He was dressed in red wizard robes, which were more elaborate than the

girl's attire. His robes were long and flowing, reaching down to his ankles, and were decorated with golden runes that seemed to shimmer in the light. An ancient book was in his left hand, its pages filled with arcane knowledge, and his right hand glowed red, as if charging up something powerful. His eyes were sharp and focused, betraying a mind constantly calculating and strategizing.



The third figure was another girl, her black hair tied back in a simple braid. She wore maroon monk attire, which was both practical and elegant. Her outfit consisted of a fitted tunic and loose trousers, allowing for ease of movement. The tunic was adorned with subtle embroidery, depicting symbols of balance and harmony. She carried a yellow staff, its surface glowing at various points with a soft, magical light. Her eyes were calm and focused, exuding an aura of quiet strength and inner peace. Every movement she made was

deliberate and graceful, as if she were in perfect harmony with the world around her.



The three figures stood before us, their expressions a mix of determination and caution. It was clear that they were here for the same reason we were, and they were not going to back down easily.

"Who are you people?" the girl in maroon shouted, her voice filled with anger as she readied her weapon, a staff crackling with energy.

James, ever the one to break the tension, stepped forward with a grin. "Well, looks like we have some competition. Nice outfits, by the way."

The girl in maroon glared at him, her anger intensifying. "Ravi! Did Raasgard send them to stop us?" she demanded, turning to the boy

in red wizard robes, his hands already glowing with a faint, fiery aura.

Ravi shook his head, trying to reassure her. "No... I don't think so. I've never seen them before."

The girl in the pink mage attire narrowed her eyes, her fingers tracing the runes on her staff. "We're here for the chest. We need its contents."

Ramsey stepped forward, his expression serious. "So do we. But maybe we can find a way to share whatever's inside."

Ravi shook his head again. "We can't take that risk. We need whatever's in that chest to complete our mission."

I stepped forward, trying to keep the situation calm. "We understand, but we're not here to fight. Maybe we can help each other."

The girl in the pink attire looked thoughtful. "Perhaps. But we need to know we can trust you."

"Do you even know what the chest contains?" the girl in maroon asked angrily.

James replied with a smirk, "A ring," in a funny, exaggerated tone.

That was when I heard the name that I wouldn't unhear for the rest of my life.

The girl in maroon looked at the girl in pink, her expression filled with concern. "Suya... I have a bad feeling about this. They know about the Ring. I am sure Raasgard sent them!"

Suya tried to calm her down. "Maya ... I don't think that is true. Come on, let's ask them." She turned to us, her voice a bit shaky. "Hey, Mr. Man in Black."

Both Ramsey and I responded simultaneously, "Yes." Ramsey said it because he was dressed in black clothing, and I said it because I am black. The moment was unexpectedly funny, breaking the tension for a brief second.

Ravi spoke up, his voice steady but his eyes wary. "How did you come here?"

Ramsey answered, "Well, the cave from Phugtal Monastery."

All of them started charging their magical abilities consecutively.

Suya shouted, "PHUGTAL MONASTERY WAS DESTROYED LAST YEAR FROM A DEMON ATTACK!!!"

The air crackled with energy as they prepared for a confrontation. The tension was palpable, and we knew that a fight was imminent.

I tried to explain our presence. "Look... easy, easy. We don't want any fight, but we won't back down either. We're here for the Artifact, just like you," I said, hoping to avoid conflict.

Suya's eyes narrowed. "Your words mean nothing. Prove your intentions or face the consequences."

James, ever the peacemaker, suggested, "Alright, let's settle this without unnecessary violence. How about a little demonstration of trust?"

Maya scoffed. "Trust? From strangers who claim to come from a place that no longer exists? I think not."

Ramsey stepped forward, his voice calm but firm. "We have no reason to lie. If Phugtal Monastery was destroyed, we didn't know. We're just following the clues we have."

Suya hesitated, her eyes flickering with uncertainty. "If you're telling the truth, then show us something that proves your intentions."

James, always quick with a joke, added, "How about a magic trick? I can make a coin disappear."

Ravi's hands ignited with flames. "Enough talk. Let's see if you can handle the heat."

The battle erupted in a blur of motion. Suyu manipulated gravity, trying to disorient me, but my super speed allowed me to dodge her

attacks with ease. Ramsey's pinpoint accuracy kept Ravi at bay, his arrows slicing through the air with deadly precision. James, despite struggling against Maya's nullifying staff, used his strength and wit to outmaneuver her.

Adrenaline coursed through my veins as I landed quick strikes on Suyu, disrupting her concentration. Ramsey's precise shots weakened Ravi's defenses, forcing him to retreat and regroup. James, ever resourceful, turned Maya's own momentum against her, using the environment to his advantage.

The fight was intense, each side showcasing their unique abilities. The golden temple echoed with the sounds of clashing powers and determined shouts. The air crackled with energy, and the ground trembled beneath our feet. I knew that the outcome of this battle would determine who would claim the chest and its mysterious contents.

The air in the golden temple crackled with tension as James stepped forward, his body suddenly enveloped in a brilliant yellow energy. Sparks of electricity danced around him, illuminating the intricate carvings on the walls. Ravi's eyes widened in surprise; he hadn't expected any of us to wield magic. The atmosphere grew heavy with anticipation, each breath drawn in the temple seeming to hold the weight of the impending clash.

"You think you can handle this?" James taunted, his voice echoing with power and confidence. The yellow energy around him pulsed

and crackled, casting an eerie glow that made the shadows dance on the ancient walls.

Ravi's surprise quickly turned to determination. "Let's see what you've got," he growled, his hands igniting with fierce, red flames. The heat from his flames was intense, distorting the air around him and causing the stone beneath his feet to sizzle and crack.

The two clashed with a force that shook the temple to its very foundations. James's yellow electricity surged forward, meeting Ravi's demon flames in a spectacular display of power. The air around them sizzled and sparked, the intense heat and energy creating a whirlwind of chaos. Each collision of their powers sent shockwaves through the temple, causing the walls to tremble and the ground to quake.



James cracked his knuckles, his muscles rippling with the **Might of Titanus**. "Ready to dance, fire boy?"

Ravi's hands ignited with flames, his black hair whipping around as he summoned the **Inferno Ray**. "Bring it on, lightning rod."

With a roar, James charged forward, his **Titan's Might** allowing him to cover the distance in a single bound. He swung a massive fist at Ravi, the force of his punch creating a shockwave that rattled the nearby trees.

Ravi dodged to the side, his **Zephyr's Dash** granting him incredible speed. He retaliated with a **Blazing Barrage**, launching a rapid series of fireballs at James. The fireballs exploded on impact, but James's **Enduring Titan** resilience allowed him to withstand the blasts.

"Is that all you've got?" James taunted, his body crackling with electricity. He raised his hands, summoning a **Tempest's Wrath**. Lightning bolts arced from his fingertips, striking the ground around Ravi and creating a cage of electrical energy.

Ravi smirked, his eyes glowing with fiery determination. He raised his hands, summoning a **Flame Shield** to absorb the lightning strikes. The flames swirled around him, deflecting the electrical energy and protecting him from harm.

James didn't let up. He leaped into the air, his **Sky Sovereign** ability allowing him to take flight. From above, he unleashed a **Storm Surge**, projecting powerful energy blasts towards Ravi.

Ravi countered with a **Phoenix Burst**, releasing a powerful burst of flames in all directions. The flames collided with the energy blasts, creating a massive explosion that shook the battlefield.

As the smoke cleared, James landed back on the ground, his eyes narrowing. "Not bad, but let's see how you handle this." He charged forward again, his fists electrified with **Tempest's Wrath**.

Ravi met him head-on, his hands enveloped in flames from his **Scorching Touch**. The two clashed in a flurry of punches and kicks, each blow sending sparks and embers flying.

James's strength and endurance were formidable, but Ravi's speed and fiery attacks kept him on his toes. The ground beneath them scorched and cracked from the intensity of their battle.

In a final, desperate move, Ravi summoned his **Solar Flare**, creating a blinding flash of light and intense heat. James staggered back, momentarily blinded and disoriented.

Taking advantage of the opening, Ravi unleashed his **Inferno Ray**, a concentrated beam of red-hot energy. The beam struck James, piercing through his defenses and setting his clothes ablaze.



James gritted his teeth, his body crackling with electricity as he fought through the pain. With a roar, he summoned all his strength and delivered a powerful punch, creating a shockwave that sent Ravi flying.

Both combatants lay on the ground, panting and exhausted. The battlefield was scorched and littered with debris, a testament to the intensity of their clash.

James managed a grin, despite the burns and bruises. "Not bad, fire boy. Not bad at all."

Ravi chuckled, his flames flickering out as he lay back. "Same to you, golden boy. Same to you."

James moved with agility, his yellow energy forming arcs of lightning that struck at Ravi with precision. Each bolt of lightning was like a spear, aimed to pierce through Ravi's defenses. Ravi countered with waves of fire, each blast more ferocious than the last. The ground beneath them scorched and cracked, the sheer force of their attacks leaving marks on the ancient stone. The temple, once a place of serene beauty, was now a battlefield of elemental fury.

As the battle raged on, James's electricity began to overpower Ravi's flames. Each strike pushed Ravi further back, his defenses weakening. James's eyes glowed with determination, his energy crackling louder and brighter with each passing second. He closed in, his attacks becoming more devastating with each strike. He punched Ravi with the **Might of Titanus**, each blow bursting with yellow energy. Ravi blocked every attack with a **Flame Shield**, but James's relentless assault began to wear him down. The clash was intense, the temple walls trembling from the sheer force of their powers.

Ravi, using all the high magic he had learned over the years, unleashed a **Phoenix Burst** that engulfed the room, circling James. The flames roared and crackled, creating a fiery vortex that threatened to consume everything in its path. But James was undeterred. He unleashed a barrage of lightning strikes, dispelling the flames and forming dozens of small bolts of lightning. With a swift motion, he hurled them at Ravi, each bolt crackling with deadly precision.

Ravi countered with **Blazing Barrage**, scorching the air around him. The temple was a battlefield of elemental fury, each attack leaving its mark on the ancient structure. James flew forward, his super strength propelling him like a missile. But Ravi, anticipating the move, sidestepped at the last moment, causing James to crash into the wall with a thunderous impact. The collision sent cracks spiderwebbing through the stone, dust and debris raining down from the ceiling.

Seizing the opportunity, Ravi conjured a giant ball of **Inferno Ray** and hurled it at James. The explosion rocked the temple, debris flying in all directions. The heat from the blast was searing, the force of the explosion sending shockwaves through the air.

James, battered but not broken, rose from the rubble, his eyes blazing with determination. He knew this was his last chance. Clutching his locket, he began to channel all his remaining energy into it. The locket, a family heirloom imbued with ancient magic, started to glow with an intense yellow light. Sparks of electricity danced around him, and the air hummed with power.

"Time to end this," James muttered, his voice filled with resolve. He focused all his abilities—into a singular, devastating attack. The locket absorbed the energy, amplifying it into a concentrated beam of pure, yellow energy. This ultimate move, he called as **Thunder Flash**, was a testament to his mastery over his powers.

Ravi, now desperate, summoned his flames to counter the beam. His hands ignited with the intense heat of **Inferno Ray**, and he unleashed a torrent of fire to meet James's attack. The two forces collided in a cataclysmic explosion of light and fire. For a moment, it seemed as if Ravi's flames might hold, but James's energy proved too powerful. The beam pierced through the flames, striking Ravi and sending him crashing to the ground. The impact left a smoking crater in the stone floor, the air thick with the scent of scorched earth and ozone.

Ravi lay there, near the brink of defeat, his body smoking from the impact. The temple fell silent, the air thick with the aftermath of their catastrophic battle. The once serene sanctuary was now a battlefield, scarred by the clash of elemental titans.

The outcome seemed clear, but then suddenly, red lava started pouring out of Ravi's body, his skin turning a deep crimson. His veins glowed with molten energy, and steam hissed from his pores. Horns began to sprout from his head, curling menacingly as his transformation took hold. His muscles bulged and expanded, tearing through his clothes as his form grew larger and more monstrous. He stood up, his form now towering and imposing, magical energy radiating from him in overwhelming waves. The ground beneath him cracked and sizzled, unable to withstand the sheer heat emanating from his body.

His eyes blazed with a furious red light, locking onto James with an intensity that sent shivers down my spine. The air around him

shimmered with heat, distorting his figure like a mirage. The very atmosphere seemed to tremble in fear of the power he now wielded.

Suya stopped fighting and looked at Ravi, her face pale with fear. "Oh no... It is happening again... No power in this world is strong enough to stop him now."

I replied, baffled, "What do you mean? What is happening?"

Suya's voice trembled as she spoke, her eyes never leaving Ravi's transformed figure. "Ravi... he... he has now become..."

The temple walls began to crack and crumble under the pressure of his power. The air was thick with the scent of sulfur and burning stone. Every step he took left molten footprints in the ground, and the very earth seemed to recoil from his touch. His horns, now fully formed, glowed with an inner fire, and his breath came out in searing gusts that scorched the air.

James, despite his earlier confidence, took a step back, his eyes wide with a mix of awe and fear. The sheer magnitude of Asura's power was unlike anything he had ever faced. The once serene temple was now a battlefield of apocalyptic proportions, and the true fight was only just beginning. And then it spoke.



"**I ... am ...the ... Asura!**" Ravi screamed, his voice echoing through the temple like a thunderclap. With a burst of speed and power, he launched himself towards James, his flames now transformed into molten lava that left trails of burning destruction in his wake. The heat was unbearable, the air itself seeming to catch fire as he moved.

James braced himself, his yellow energy crackling around him like a protective shield. But as Ravi's fist collided with James's defenses, the impact was cataclysmic. The force of their clash sent shockwaves through the temple, the ground beneath them shattering and splintering. Every punch Ravi landed on James's body and magic shield left searing burn marks, the sheer heat of his lava-infused strikes overwhelming James's defenses.

James conjured shield after shield, each one bursting into fragments the instant Ravi's fists made contact. The relentless assault was like nothing James had ever faced before. Ravi's strength, now that of a titan, made him even more formidable than James. The temple walls trembled with each collision, ancient stone crumbling under the strain of their battle.

Ravi, now fully embracing his Asura form, leaped back with a feral grin. He thrust both hands forward, and a beam of pure, red-hot energy erupted from his palms. The beam tore through the air, a searing lance of heat and power that hurtled towards James.

James with a surge of power emerged his body crackling with electricity. He summoned his **Thunder Flash**, a concentrated beam of yellow energy, and fired it at Asura. The beam cut through the air, but Asura countered with a **Hellfire Manipulation**, summoning a wall of intense flames that absorbed the impact. The clash of their powers created a shockwave that sent debris flying in all directions.

Asura roared, his voice shaking the very foundations of the temple. He spread his arms wide, and **Flame Wings** erupted from his back, lifting him into the air. From above, he rained down torrents of hellfire, each blast creating craters in the ground and setting the temple ablaze. James dodged and weaved, his **Sky Sovereign** allowing him to take flight and avoid the worst of the inferno.

But Asura was relentless. He swooped down, his **Chaos Claws** slashing through the air with deadly precision. James barely

managed to block the attack, his **Titan's Might** straining against the overwhelming force of Asura's blows. Each clash sent sparks and embers flying, the heat from Asura's claws searing James's skin.

Desperate, James unleashed a **Tempest's Wrath**, summoning a storm of lightning bolts that struck Asura from all sides. The bolts crackled and hissed as they met Asura's **Infernal Aura**, the intense heat causing the lightning to dissipate before it could do any real damage. Asura laughed, a deep, menacing sound that echoed through the burning temple.

With a roar, Asura unleashed a **Rage Blast**, a massive explosion of energy that obliterated everything in its path. James was thrown back, crashing into the temple wall with a bone-jarring impact. The explosion that followed was massive, a blinding flash of light and heat that filled the temple with an ash-laden fog.



As the dust and smoke began to settle, the silhouette of Asura stood alone amidst the devastation. The once grand and serene temple was now a ruin, its walls scorched and crumbling. Ravi's transformation had left him standing victorious, his eyes still blazing with fury. James was nowhere to be seen, lost in the fog of ash and destruction.

The air was thick with the scent of sulfur and burning stone, the heat from Asura's presence still palpable. His **Infernal Aura** radiated an intense heat, causing the very air to shimmer around him. The ground beneath his feet was molten, leaving a trail of lava in his wake.

Suya, trembling, took a step back, her voice barely a whisper. "We need to get out of here. There's no stopping him now."

Then suddenly, the same move, **Rage Blast**, came hurtling back towards Asura, hitting him with a gigantic force and blasting him towards the wall. The impact was so powerful that the entire temple seemed to shake, ancient stones crumbling and dust raining down from the ceiling. The shockwave rippled through the air, sending debris flying in all directions.

Out of the fog and destruction, James emerged, glowing with an intense yellow energy. His eyes were fierce, and his hands blazed with power. The air around him crackled with electricity, and his presence radiated an aura of invincibility. He had done the impossible—using his anti-magic abilities, he had copied all the moves and power of Asura.



James's body was enveloped in a shimmering aura, the yellow energy pulsating with raw power. His muscles bulged with newfound strength, and his eyes glowed with a determined light. He raised his hands, and the air around him seemed to hum with anticipation.

"Asura, was it?" James called out, his voice echoing through the ruined temple. "Haha, time to have a taste of your own medicine. And trust me, it's gonna be spicy!"

Suya's eyes widened in shock as she turned to me. "How is this possible? When Ravi becomes Asura, he becomes an unstoppable force. I don't think anyone can subdue him aside from Raasgard."

I looked back at her, a confident smile spreading across my face. "You haven't met James. He's the bane of magic... The Nullifier."

Suya's disbelief was palpable. "The Nullifier? But how can he wield such power? Ravi's transformation into Asura is supposed to be invincible!"

I nodded, my eyes never leaving the battlefield. "James has a unique ability. He can absorb and replicate the powers of his opponents, turning their strengths against them. It's not just about magic; it's about understanding and mastering it."

James, now fully charged with Asura's powers, stood tall amidst the rubble. "You thought you were unstoppable, Asura. But you forgot one thing—there's always someone stronger. And better looking."

Asura roared in fury, his eyes blazing with rage. "You dare challenge me with my own power? I will crush you!"

James smirked, his confidence unwavering. "Bring it on, hothead. Let's see if you can handle your own strength. Spoiler alert: you can't."

James burst forward at top speed, flying towards Asura and punching him with full force. The collision was cataclysmic, sending shockwaves through the temple. Ravi, in his demon form, exerted all his strength, meeting James's attack head-on. Their punches brought devastation to the room, each impact causing the ground to tremble and the walls to crack. It was as if two titans were clashing, their raw power threatening to tear the temple apart.

With every punch Asura landed on James, James absorbed the force and used it against him with even greater power. James's **Titan's Might** combined with Asura's **Infernal Strength** into an overwhelming **Infernal Might**, each strike sending shockwaves through the air. Asura's red mana shield flickered and strained under the relentless assault, each strike from James bursting through with explosive force. The intensity of their battle was palpable, the air thick with the scent of ozone and burning stone.

Asura, realizing the futility of his current strategy, jumped back and pointed a finger towards James. A tiny orb of red energy began to form at his fingertip, growing larger and larger at a rapid pace until it covered half the size of the chamber. With a roar, he unleashed the **Inferno Sphere** towards James. The explosion that followed was deafening, a blinding flash of light and heat that filled the temple with an ash-laden fog.

James braced for impact, his yellow energy forming a protective barrier around him. The force of the explosion was immense, but James stood his ground. As the dust began to settle, he hurled the same **Inferno Sphere** back towards Asura with even greater force, using his **Thunder Flash**. The resulting explosion was even more devastating, the shockwave tearing through the temple and sending debris flying in all directions.

But Asura still wasn't defeated. He leaped back towards James, his fists blazing with red-hot energy. Their fists collided in a massive explosion, scorching everything around them. The sheer force of their punches sent ripples through the air, the ground beneath them cracking and splintering. They kept punching one another, each blow bringing further destruction to the temple. The walls trembled, ancient stone crumbling under the strain of their battle.

Asura unleashed a **Hellfire Manipulation**, summoning torrents of hellfire that roared towards James. James countered with his own **Tempest's Wrath**, lightning bolts arcing from his fingertips to meet the flames. The clash of fire and lightning created a maelstrom of energy, the air crackling with power.

James took to the air, dodging Asura's attacks and launching his own from above. He rained down bolts of lightning, each strike aimed with deadly precision. Asura responded by spreading his **Flame Wings**, taking flight and meeting James in the air. Their aerial battle was a blur of motion, each attack leaving trails of fire and lightning in their wake.

Asura, growing more desperate, unleashed a **Rage Blast**, a massive explosion of energy that obliterated everything in its path. James was thrown back, crashing into the temple wall with a bone-jarring impact. He struggled to his feet, his body battered and bruised, but his spirit unbroken.

James, now fully in control of his copied powers, unleashed a **Demonic Roar** that paralyzed Asura with fear. Seizing the moment, he fired an **Inferno Beam** from his hands, the concentrated hellfire cutting through the air and striking Asura with devastating precision.

Asura staggered back, his body smoking from the impact. He tried to summon his **Infernal Aura** to burn James, but James countered with his own aura, the two forces clashing in a blinding display of power.

With a final, desperate move, James summoned all his strength and unleashed a **Thunder Flash**. The concentrated beam of yellow energy pierced through Asura's defenses, striking him with cataclysmic force. The impact sent Asura crashing into the wall, the explosion leaving a smoking crater in the stone.

James unleashed all his powers, his yellow energy crackling with intensity. But Asura undeterred did the same, his red flames burning hotter than ever. The fight was catastrophic, the temple a battlefield of elemental fury. Each punch, each blast of energy, left its mark on the ancient structure, the once serene temple now a ruin of scorched stone and shattered pillars.

In the midst of this chaos, James knew he had to end the battle decisively. Drawing upon the full power of his anti-magic locket, he began to channel all the energy he had absorbed from Asura. His body glowed with an intense yellow light, the energy crackling and sparking around him like a living storm.

With a determined shout, James raised his hands above his head, forming a massive **Lightning Sphere**. The sphere pulsed with raw power, growing larger and brighter with each passing second. Asura, sensing the impending attack, roared in defiance, his red flames surging to meet the challenge.

James brought his hands down, hurling the **Lightning Sphere** towards Asura. The sphere collided with Asura's flames, creating a blinding explosion of light and heat. The force of the impact sent shockwaves through the temple, the ground beneath them shattering and the walls crumbling. The floor gave way, and both combatants began to fall into the abyss below.

As they plummeted through the collapsing temple, debris and dust swirling around them, James knew he had to end the battle decisively. Drawing upon the full power of his anti-magic locket, he began to channel all the energy he had absorbed from Asura. His body glowed with an intense yellow light, the energy crackling and sparking around him like a living storm.

With a determined shout, James focused all his remaining energy into a single, concentrated beam. This ultimate move, known as

Infernal Flash, combined all the abilities of Asura and the Nullifier into a single beam of pure, malevolent energy. The beam of yellow and red energy shot forward, piercing through the remnants of Asura's flames and striking him directly in mid-air.

The sheer force of the **Infernal Flash** overwhelmed Asura, his red flames flickering and dying out. The beam cut through the chaos, illuminating the dark chasm with its blinding light. Asura let out a final, anguished roar as the beam struck him, his body slowly reverting back to Ravi's form. Ravi's form was engulfed in the energy, his body smoking from the impact as they continued to fall.



But James wasn't done yet. With a burst of speed, he flew downwards towards Ravi, his fist crackling with yellow energy. He aimed for a massive punch, his **Titan's Might** combined with **Infernal Strength** into an overwhelming **Infernal Might**. As he closed in, the air around his fist seemed to warp and shimmer with the sheer power he was channeling.



James's punch connected with Ravi's chest, and the impact was cataclysmic. They both crashed down onto the rocks below with a gigantic explosion, the force of their collision sending shockwaves through the ground. The rocks shattered and splintered, and a massive cloud of dust and smoke erupted from the impact site, obscuring everything from view.

For a moment, there was only silence. The smoke hung thick in the air, the aftermath of their devastating clash lingering like a shroud. Slowly, the dust began to settle, revealing the scene of destruction.

As the smoke dissipated, only James was left standing. His body still glowed faintly with residual yellow energy, the air around him crackling with power. Ravi lay on the ground, his body reverted back to human form, unconscious and defeated. The once-demonic Asura

was no more, his transformation undone by the sheer force of James's final attack.

The battle was over, and James had emerged victorious. Then suddenly, as if by some ancient magic, the temple began to restore itself. As the temple begins to restore itself through an ancient, mystical energy, James and the unconscious Ravi are gently levitated back to the temple floor. The cracks in the walls mend, the scorched stone returns to its original pristine state, and the debris lifts and reassembles. The air clears, leaving behind the serene atmosphere that had existed before the battle. James looks around in amazement, the once-ruined temple now standing as if untouched by the catastrophic fight.

James, still glowing faintly with residual yellow energy, looked around in amazement. The once-ruined temple now stood as if untouched by the catastrophic fight that had just taken place. The intricate carvings on the walls were as detailed and beautiful as ever, and the golden light that filled the chamber seemed to shine even brighter.

Suya, still in shock, turned to me with wide eyes. "How is that possible? Asura cannot be defeated! Maya and I had to use all our powers just to stop him, and even then, it was impossible. How did your friend manage to defeat him? I've never seen magic this powerful."

I couldn't help but chuckle. "Eh, what can I say? That's James for you. Maybe the world's just too big for you guys to handle, haha."

James, overhearing our conversation, grinned and walked over. "Oh, come on. You know me—I'm full of surprises. Plus, I had a secret weapon: my irresistible charm. Asura didn't stand a chance against that!"

Suya rolled his eyes. "Seriously, James?"

James laughed. "Okay, okay, maybe it was a bit more than charm. Let's just say I had a little help from my friends... and a lot of luck. But hey, if you ever need a hand with another world-ending demon, you know who to call!"

Ravi, now back in his human form and lying on the ground, groaned as he slowly regained consciousness. The transformation back to normal had left him exhausted and defeated, but the temple's restoration seemed to have a calming effect on him as well.

Suya and Maya, who had been watching the temple with bated breath, exchanged looks of disbelief. Suyu turned to me, her eyes wide with shock. "The temple... it's as if the battle never happened."

I smiled, feeling a sense of awe and relief. "It seems the temple has its own way of preserving itself. Maybe it's a sign that our journey here is far from over."

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Suya stepped forward, her eyes gleaming with determination. "Let's do this. We are all three, right? Let's do best of two. Your friend James already won, so he and Ravi are out of the contest. You've got one point. If you win one more battle, you will take the Realmless Ring. If we win the next two battles, then we will take the ring."

Maya frowned, her skepticism evident. "I don't think that is a good idea."

Suya, smiling confidently, replied, "I think that is the best idea."

I looked at her, amused by her boldness. "Well, okay, we can do that."

I readied myself, feeling the familiar rush of adrenaline as my super speed kicked in. Suyu's hands began to flare with pink energy, her magical aura intensifying. The air around us seemed to hum with anticipation.

James, ever the comedian, stepped forward as the announcer.

"Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, and mystical beings of all ages! Welcome to the next thrilling round of our epic showdown! In this corner, we have the speedster extraordinaire, Eric! And in the other corner, the gravity-bending mage, Suyu! Let's get ready to rumble!"

I couldn't help but chuckle at James's antics, but my focus quickly returned to Suyu. Her pink energy swirled around her, creating a mesmerizing display of power. I knew this battle would be challenging, but I was ready to give it my all.

The temple, now restored to its pristine state, seemed to hold its breath as we prepared to clash. The stakes were high, and the Realmless Ring was within our grasp. With a final nod to James, I launched myself forward, my speed turning me into a blur. Suyu responded in kind, her pink energy flaring as she manipulated gravity to counter my movements.

The battle had begun, and the outcome would determine the fate of the Realmless Ring.

The moment the battle began, I took off like a speeding bullet, aiming to hit Suyu with all my power. My speed was my greatest asset, and I intended to use it to overwhelm her. Suyu, however, was quick to react, using her magic to thwart my movements. But I was too fast for her, darting around her defenses and landing blows that would have incapacitated any normal opponent.

Suyu, realizing the futility of trying to match my speed directly, began to form a magical shield around herself. The pink energy shimmered and pulsed, creating a barrier that deflected my attacks. But I was relentless, my fists striking the shield with such speed and force that it began to crack and shatter. I knew that all I needed was one hit at Mach 1 speed, and it would be all over.



Just as my fist neared her, everything started to slow down. It was as if time itself had come to a crawl. My hand, which had been moving at incredible speed, now seemed to be inching forward at a snail's pace. I couldn't understand what was happening. My momentum was gone, and my fist hovered just inches from Suyu's face.

Suya looked at me with a smug expression. "What happened? Aren't you going to hit me?"

"But I am," I replied, bewildered. "How is this possible?"

"That is gravity that you're feeling," Suya explained, her voice calm and confident. "It doesn't matter how fast you move. The space you are standing on is under my control."

I was shocked. "Wha... what do you mean?"

Suya smirked. "That is gravity that you're feeling," Suya explained, her voice calm and confident. "It doesn't matter how fast you move. The space you are standing on is under my control, which I call **'Eternal Horizon.'**"

"Eternal Horizon?" I echoed, still trying to process what was happening.

"Yes," she continued. "With Eternal Horizon, I can distort, expand, and contract space and time around me. It ensures that any attack directed at me takes an infinite amount of time to reach. Essentially, you can never hit me."

I stared at her, realizing the full extent of her power. "But my fist... IT IS RIGHT HERE!!!"

Suya nodded. "Imagine you're throwing a ball at me. Normally, it would take a second to reach me. But with Eternal Horizon, I can

stretch that second into an eternity. The ball would appear to move slower and slower until it practically stops in mid-air. No matter how fast you throw it, it will never reach me because the space and time around me are constantly expanding."

Suya's eyes gleamed with a mixture of amusement and dominance. "Do you know what happens when an unstoppable force combines with an immovable object?" As she spoke, she began to weave her magic, making her hand both weightless and incredibly heavy at the same time.

"No..." I replied, my voice barely a whisper.

"**Annihilation**," Suya said with a smirk, her voice filled with authority.

She raised her hand, and I could feel the air around us shift. The pink energy swirling around her intensified, growing denser and more vibrant. Her hand began to glow with an otherworldly light, the energy pulsating and crackling with raw power. It was as if she was drawing the very essence of gravity itself into her palm.

The ground beneath her feet started to crack and crumble, unable to withstand the immense gravitational forces she was manipulating. Small stones and debris began to levitate around her, caught in the swirling vortex of energy. Her hand seemed to flicker between being weightless and incredibly heavy, a paradox of forces that defied comprehension.



With a final, concentrated effort, Suyu's hand became a blur of motion, the energy coalescing into a single, devastating point. She delivered a punch that connected with my chest. The force of the blow was unlike anything I had ever felt. It was as if the weight of the entire world had been concentrated into that single strike. The impact sent shockwaves through the temple, causing the very

ground to tremble and the walls to shake. I was thrown backward, crashing into the stone floor with a force that left me gasping for breath.

The entire temple seemed to resonate with the power of Suyu's punch, the echoes of the impact lingering in the air. I struggled to get up, my body aching from the force of the blow. Suyu stood over me, her pink energy still swirling around her, a look of triumph on her face. The battle was far from over, and I knew I had to find a way to counter her incredible control over gravity.

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James, ever the comedian, couldn't resist adding his commentary. "Ladies and gentlemen, it looks like Eric just got a firsthand lesson in gravity! Let's hope he can bounce back from that one!"

I gritted my teeth, determined not to let Suyu's control over gravity be my downfall. I pushed myself to my feet, my mind racing to find a way to turn the tide. Suyu's smirk only fueled my resolve. I had to outthink her, use my speed in a way she couldn't anticipate.

I began to move again, this time more strategically. I darted around her, testing the limits of her control over the space around us. Suyu's eyes followed my every move, her pink energy flaring as she tried to keep up. I could see the strain in her expression; maintaining such precise control over gravity was taking its toll.

James's voice rang out again, filled with mock enthusiasm. "And Eric is back in the game, folks! Can he outmaneuver the gravity queen? Stay tuned!"

I focused on finding a weak point in Suya's defenses. Her control over gravity was impressive, but it wasn't infallible. I just needed to find the right angle, the right moment to strike. As I continued to circle her, I noticed a slight hesitation in her movements, a fraction of a second where her focus wavered.

Seizing the opportunity, I accelerated to my top speed, aiming for that precise moment of weakness. My fist, charged with all the power I could muster, shot forward. Suya's eyes widened in surprise as my punch connected, shattering her shield and sending her sprawling to the ground.

The temple shook with the force of the impact, the echoes of our battle reverberating through the ancient stone. Suya lay on the ground, dazed and defeated, her pink energy flickering and fading. I stood over her, breathing heavily but victorious.

James's voice broke the silence, filled with genuine admiration. "And there you have it, folks! Eric, the speedster, has done it again! Gravity may be a tough opponent, but nothing can stop the power of determination and a well-timed punch!"

But then, suddenly, I was unable to move. It felt as if an invisible force was pressing down on me, crushing me to the floor. I struggled to stand, but the weight was too much. Gravity was pinning me

down, and I could barely breathe. Suya slowly stood up, her eyes filled with determination.

"When I said the space is under my control, I meant it," Suya said, her voice steady and commanding. "And I meant all of it."



Suya raised a finger towards the ceiling, and a pink ball of pure malevolent energy began to form. It grew larger and larger, pulsating with an ominous glow. I watched helplessly, unable to move, as the ball of energy expanded, filling the space above us.

James, ever the comedian, couldn't resist a quip. "Well, folks, it looks like Eric's in a bit of a sticky situation! Gravity's got him down, and Suyu's about to drop the hammer!"

The pink ball of energy continued to grow, its light casting eerie shadows on the temple walls. I could feel the heat and power radiating from it, and I knew that if it hit me, it would be over. I struggled against the crushing force, but it was no use. Suyu had complete control.

Suya looked down at me, her eyes gleaming with triumph. "You are formidable Eric but your speed is no match for my gravity. I call it **Fallen Star**. It's a highly dense giant sphere of magical energy, a hundred times more dense than it looks. When it hits, it will crush everything beneath it with the force of a collapsing star."

With a flick of her wrist, Suyu sent the ball of energy hurtling towards me. It descended with terrifying speed, and I could only watch as it came crashing down. The impact was earth-shattering, a blinding explosion of light and sound that rocked the entire temple. The ground beneath me cracked and splintered, and I was thrown back, my body battered and broken.

I lay there, defeated, the remnants of the pink energy crackling around me. The pain was overwhelming, and I could barely move. Suyu stood over me, her expression one of triumph.

James's voice cut through the silence, his tone a mix of concern and humor. "And there you have it, folks! Gravity wins this round! Let's hope Eric can bounce back from this one... if he can still bounce at all!"

The temple, now eerily silent, bore the marks of our intense battle. I knew I had given it my all, but Suyu's control over gravity had proven too much. As I lay there, struggling to catch my breath, I couldn't help but feel a grudging respect for her power and determination. The fight was over, but the journey was far from complete.

The temple restored itself again, the ancient magic weaving the stones back into place, erasing all signs of the fierce battles that had taken place. The air was thick with anticipation as the time came for the final showdown: Ramsey versus Maya. A skilled agent against a formidable anti-mage staff user.

Ramsey placing his hands down his gun. "So Maya was it... It ends with us, Are you already."



Maya readying her staff, "Ready to crush that look off your face badly."

Ramsey cracked his fists and changing his bullet magazines to non lethal, his eyes locked onto Maya with unwavering focus. Without a moment's hesitation, he dashed towards her, his movements a blur of speed and precision. Maya met his charge head-on, her staff whirling with deadly grace. The clash of their skills was immediate and intense, each strike and parry a testament to their training and prowess.

Ramsey, unarmed, relied on his agility and combat experience. He ducked and weaved, avoiding the lethal arcs of Maya's staff. Maya, in turn, demonstrated her mastery of the weapon, each swing and thrust executed with pinpoint accuracy. The fight felt grounded, a

dance of skill and strategy, until suddenly, Maya's staff began to glow with a brilliant yellow aura.

With a swift motion, Maya raised her staff, creating several circular projectiles that hovered menacingly in the air. She hurled them at Ramsey, each one a deadly missile of magical energy. Ramsey, sensing the shift in scale, quickdrew his pistol and fired with pinpoint accuracy, deflecting the projectiles in a dazzling display of marksmanship.

Ramsey's eyes narrowed as he continued to deflect Maya's magical projectiles with his precise shots. Each bullet found its mark, causing the glowing orbs to dissipate into harmless sparks. But Maya was relentless, her staff a blur as she conjured more projectiles and advanced on him.

Ramsey, recognizing the need for a change in tactics, he focused and used **Eagle Eye**. His vision sharpened, allowing him to see the faint magical trails of Maya's attacks and predict their trajectories. With this heightened focus, he fired a **Ricochet Round** off a nearby pillar, the bullet curving around to strike Maya from an unexpected angle. She barely managed to deflect it with her staff, her eyes widening in surprise.

"Nice trick," Maya growled, her temper flaring. She slammed her staff into the ground, creating a **Magic Nullification** field around her. The air shimmered as the anti-magic energy spread, nullifying Ramsey's bullets before they could reach her.

Ramsey smirked, unfazed. He switched to his **Phantom Bullet**, a special round imbued with Nexus Fragments designed to phase through magical barriers. He fired, and the bullet passed through the nullification field, forcing Maya to dodge at the last second. The bullet grazed her arm, leaving a faint burn.

"You're not the only one with tricks," Ramsey said calmly, reloading his revolver with practiced ease using **Rapid Reload**.

James, ever the commentator, couldn't resist. "And there we have it, folks! Ramsey's showing off his sharpshooting skills! Who knew dodging magic could look this good?"

Maya, unfazed, shifted tactics. She began to channel her anti-magic abilities through her staff, the air around her crackling with energy. Ramsey, recognizing the danger, desperately dodged her attacks, his movements a blur of speed and precision. He tossed a few smoke grenades, the thick clouds obscuring Maya's vision.

In the cover of the smoke, Ramsey launched a silent assault. He struck from various angles, his punches and kicks landing with precision. Maya, disoriented, fired projectiles at random, but they found no target. Ramsey was relentless, his attacks unyielding, but Maya was not one to back down.

With a fierce determination, Maya slammed the tip of her staff into the ground. A deafening sound echoed through the temple as a wave of energy surged outward, dissipating the smoke and pushing

everything away. The staff crackled with residual energy, its power undiminished.

Ramsey was nowhere to be seen. Maya scanned the area, her eyes sharp and focused. Suddenly, a bullet shot towards the tip of her staff, striking it with pinpoint accuracy. An uncontrolled burst of energy erupted near her head, and she was forced to throw the staff away to avoid the explosion.

Ramsey emerged from the shadows, his expression determined. The two engaged in hand-to-hand combat, their movements a blur of speed and skill. Maya was relentless, each move calculated to bring her closer to her staff. But Ramsey was equally determined, blocking her attempts and countering with his own attacks.

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Maya, realizing she needed to change tactics, summoned her **Magic Ward**. A shimmering barrier enveloped her, deflecting Ramsey's strikes and giving her a moment to breathe. She then used **Healing Light** to mend her minor wounds, the soothing glow restoring her energy.

Ramsey, undeterred, switched to his **Ricochet Round**. He fired a shot that bounced off the temple walls, curving around to strike

Maya from behind. The impact shattered her ward, forcing her to react quickly. She retaliated with **Dispel Magic**, nullifying the lingering effects of Ramsey's bullets and clearing the air of any residual magic.

With a fierce determination, Maya raised her staff and channeled her **Barrier Breaker**. She struck the ground, sending a shockwave of anti-magic energy towards Ramsey. He leaped to the side, narrowly avoiding the blast, but the force of the attack left him momentarily off balance.

Seizing the opportunity, Maya used **Enchanted Strike**, infusing her staff with lower-level magic to enhance its power. She swung at Ramsey, the staff crackling with energy. Ramsey blocked the strike with his revolver, the impact sending sparks flying.

Ramsey quickly regained his footing and activated **Eagle Eye**. His vision sharpened, allowing him to see the faint magical trails of Maya's attacks. He fired a **Phantom Bullet**, the round phasing through her defenses and grazing her shoulder.

Maya winced but didn't falter. She summoned her **Magic Nullification** field, creating a zone where all magical effects were nullified. Ramsey's bullets lost their magical enhancements as they entered the field, forcing him to rely on his raw skill and precision.

The two combatants circled each other, their eyes locked in a battle of wills. Maya, her temper flaring, launched a series of rapid strikes with her staff. Ramsey dodged and weaved, his movements fluid

and precise. He countered with a **Blinding Flash** round, the explosion of light momentarily blinding Maya.

Taking advantage of her disorientation, Ramsey closed the distance and delivered a series of precise strikes. Maya, her vision clearing, retaliated with a powerful **Anti-Magic Strike**, her staff glowing with energy. The blow connected, disrupting Ramsey's focus and leaving him vulnerable.

But Ramsey wasn't done yet. He activated **Rapid Reload**, quickly swapping out his spent magazine for a fresh one. He fired a **Smoke Screen** round at the ground, enveloping the area in thick smoke. Using the cover, he moved silently, positioning himself for a final strike.

Maya, her vision obscured, relied on her instincts. She swung her staff in wide arcs, creating gusts of wind to clear the smoke. But Ramsey was already on the move, using his **Silent Shot** to fire a silenced round that struck her staff, disrupting her concentration.

"Enough!" Maya shouted, her frustration boiling over. She raised her staff high, channeling her **Dispel Magic** ability to clear the smoke and reveal Ramsey's position. With fierce determination, she charged at him, her staff glowing with anti-magic energy.

Ramsey met her charge head-on, his movements fluid and precise. He dodged her strikes and countered with a **Precision Strike**, aiming for the weak points in her defense. Each hit disrupted her magical focus, but Maya's sheer willpower kept her fighting.

Ramsey made a final charge, running fast at Maya. Her eyes narrowed, and with a swift, fluid motion, she raised her staff, which began to glow with pure, crackling energy. The air around her seemed to hum with power as she prepared to strike.

Ramsey's eyes locked onto the glowing staff, his muscles tensing as he calculated his next move. He was so close to dodging it, his body already shifting to the side. But in that split second, Maya moved with lightning speed, her staff arcing through the air with deadly precision.



The staff connected with Ramsey's side, the force of the blow sending him flying across the temple. He crashed into the ground, the impact reverberating through the ancient stone. Dust and debris flew up around him as he lay there, seemingly defeated.

James, ever the commentator, couldn't resist. "Whoa! Did you see that? Maya's got some serious moves! Ramsey didn't stand a chance!"

Maya stood victorious, her staff crackling with energy. "Could have been way easier if I was fighting a magic user, but oh well, hahaha."

Suya stood tall, a triumphant smile on her face. "There you have it, we won. The ring belongs to us."

Maya chuckled, a hint of satisfaction in her voice. "Heh, at least we had a bit of fun."

James, ever the commentator, couldn't resist adding his two cents. "And there you have it, folks! Maya and Suyu take the win with style and a bit of sass. Who knew anti-magic could be so electrifying?"

Suya moved closer to the chest, her eyes gleaming with anticipation. As she opened it, a golden light bathed the chamber, illuminating the intricate carvings on the walls. The air seemed to hum with energy, the very atmosphere charged with magic. Inside the chest lay a ring, radiating a powerful magical aura that pulsed like a heartbeat. Suyu's breath caught in her throat as she reached in and slipped the ring onto her finger.

Instantly, a surge of Yellow light exploded through the chamber, filling the air with a palpable energy. The light was blinding, forcing everyone to shield their eyes. The ground trembled beneath their feet, and the walls seemed to vibrate with the intensity of the magic

being unleashed. Suya's body was enveloped in the Yellow light, her form glowing with an otherworldly brilliance.



The energy in the room grew to a crescendo, the yellow light swirling around Suya like a tempest. Her eyes glowed with the same yellow hue, and her hair lifted as if caught in an invisible wind. The power emanating from the ring was overwhelming, a force of ancient magic that seemed to resonate with the very core of the temple.

"I... I feel it," Suya said, her voice trembling with excitement. "I know where it is... **The Death Zone.**"

Ramsey, worried, glanced at Maya. "Is... she okay?"

Maya watched Suyu intently, her eyes filled with concern. "She's tapping into something powerful. Let's give her a moment."

Suyu's eyes glowed with an ethereal light, her body trembling as if channeling an immense force. "The energy... it's overwhelming. I can see the path, the ancient runes guiding us. The Death Zone... it's calling to us."

Ramsey took a step closer, his voice gentle. "Suyu, can you hear me? What do you see?"

Suyu's voice grew stronger, more confident. "I see the ley lines converging, the heart of the ancient magic. It's a place where the realms of the living and the dead intersect. The spirits are guiding us."

Just then, the light disappeared. "Maya!" She turned and hugged Maya tightly. "I know where to find it."

Maya returned the hug, a determined look in her eyes. "Well then, let's not waste any time, eh?"

Just then, Ravi, who had been lying on the ground, began to stir. He sat up, rubbing his head. "Wait... Maya... that man... do you see that locket he has?"

Maya glanced over at James, who was still standing with his usual nonchalant demeanor. "Yes, what of it?"

Ravi's eyes widened in realization. "It is a high-level anti-magic artifact... the Locket of the Realmless."

Maya's smile was enigmatic. "I know..."

Ravi's shock was evident. "What... Then why did you—"

Maya cut him off, her tone urgent and filled with a hint of mystery. "We don't have time to waste. I'll explain everything on the way. Let's go, Suyu."

Suyu turned to us, her expression softening. "Well, nice meeting you people. Take care of yourselves. Oh, and if you were wondering, the exit is over there." She pointed to a hidden doorway that had appeared in the wall, its edges glowing faintly with a mystical light.

James, never missing an opportunity for humor, stepped forward with a grin. "Well, folks, it looks like our magical friends are off on their next adventure. Let's give them a round of applause for their stellar performance!" He clapped his hands, the sound echoing through the chamber like a playful spirit.

I couldn't help but chuckle at James's antics, despite the intensity of the situation. "Thanks for the tip, Suyu. Good luck on your journey."

Suyu nodded, her eyes filled with determination and a hint of gratitude. "And to you as well. Farewell."

Maya, standing beside her, gave a small smile. "Remember, the path we walk is filled with shadows and light. Stay vigilant."

Ravi, still rubbing his head, managed a weak smile. "Take care, everyone. We'll meet again, I'm sure of it."

With that, Suyu, Maya, and Ravi made their way towards the exit, their figures disappearing into the shadows. The temple, now restored to its serene state, seemed to breathe a sigh of relief. The golden light from the chest faded, leaving behind a sense of calm and quiet.

James turned to me, his expression a mix of amusement and seriousness. "Well, that was quite the show, wasn't it? But I have to say, Eric, you really know how to keep things interesting."

I smiled, feeling a sense of camaraderie and determination. "Yeah, it was intense. But we can't let this setback stop us. We still have a mission to complete."

James nodded, his usual humor giving way to a rare moment of sincerity. "You're right. Let's keep moving. We've got a lot more to do."

We gathered ourselves, the weight of the recent battles still heavy on our minds. With a final glance at the now serene temple, we made our way towards the hidden doorway that Suyu had pointed out. The door opened with a soft creak, revealing a narrow passage that led us outside.

As we stepped through the doorway, the bright sunlight momentarily blinded us. We emerged into the open air, the cool breeze a stark contrast to the intense heat of the temple battles. But as our eyes adjusted, the sight before us left us in stunned silence.

The once majestic Phugtal Monastery lay in ruins. The grand structures that had stood for centuries were now reduced to rubble and ash. The intricate carvings and statues that had adorned the monastery were shattered, their remnants scattered across the ground. The air was thick with the scent of smoke and decay, a haunting reminder of the destruction that had taken place.



James, usually quick with a joke, was uncharacteristically silent. His eyes scanned the devastation, a look of disbelief on his face. "They

weren't lying," he finally said, his voice barely above a whisper.
"Phugtal really was destroyed a year ago."

Ramsey, ever the pragmatist, nodded grimly. "It seems those three were telling the truth. This place has seen its share of tragedy."

I looked around, my mind racing with questions. "Then what of the monks? What of Master Rinchen? Was that all an illusion, a facade?"

James shook his head slowly, his expression troubled. "It doesn't make sense. We spoke to them, interacted with them. They felt real."

Ramsey's eyes narrowed as he surveyed the ruins. "Maybe they were real, but not in the way we think. There could be powerful magic at play here, something beyond our understanding."

The thought sent a shiver down my spine. Had we been deceived by some ancient enchantment? Or was there a deeper truth hidden within the ruins of Phugtal Monastery?

James, trying to lighten the mood, attempted a weak smile. "Well, if it was an illusion, it was a pretty convincing one. I mean, I almost believed I could become a monk myself."

I couldn't help but chuckle, despite the gravity of the situation.
"Yeah, you and your anti-magic locket would have made quite the pair."

Ramsey's expression softened slightly. "Whatever the case, we need to find out what really happened here. There has to be a reason for this destruction, and for the illusions we encountered."

One more thing bugged me as we stood amidst the ruins of Phugtal Monastery.

"Ramsey, about what you did back there," I began, my voice tinged with curiosity and concern.

Ramsey raised a hand, cutting me off gently. "I know, I know, but hear me out... I did that for a reason." He tapped a button on his vest, and a small device beeped in response.

A call rang through on Lt. Cheng's phone as she and Tiffany made their way to Lukla. Cheng answered, her voice steady and alert. "Hello?"

"How good is your climbing?" Ramsey's voice crackled through the line, a hint of urgency in his tone.

Cheng exchanged a puzzled glance with Tiffany before responding. "Pretty good, why?"

Ramsey's voice came through again, calm but insistent. **"You two are climbing Everest."**

